

## Is there a pill to prevent anthrax?

No. There are drugs that will help keep infected people from getting worse, if they are taken right away.

A doctor or public health worker can give these drugs only when a person is sick. The pills can cause side effects.

Children should not get medicine for anthrax unless they have had contact with the disease.

## Where can I learn more about anthrax?

**Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**

*[www.dhmh.state.md.us](http://www.dhmh.state.md.us)*

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

*[www.cdc.gov.smallpox](http://www.cdc.gov.smallpox)*



**Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene**

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., *Governor*

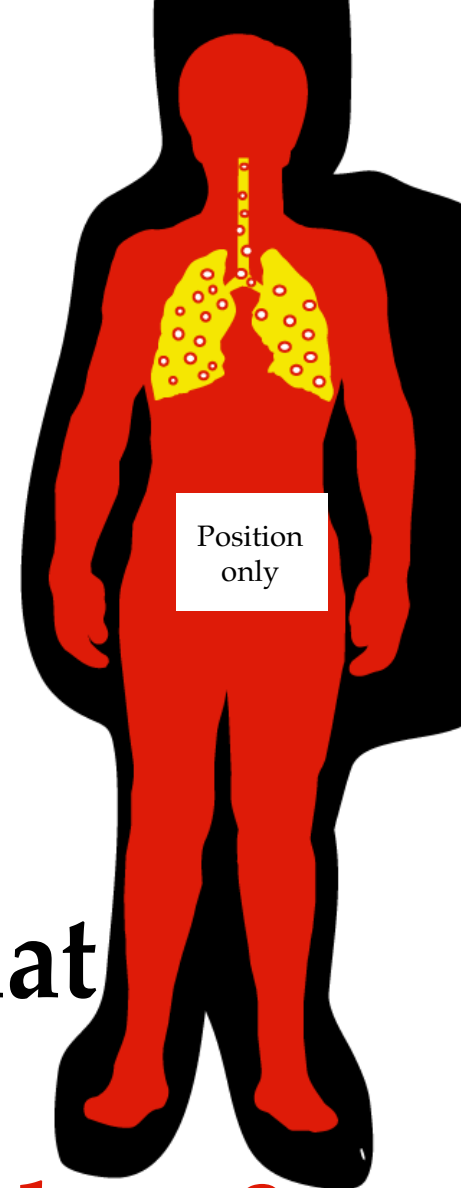
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*Anthrax - English - A*



# What is Anthrax?

## What is anthrax?

- Anthrax is an illness caused by a bacteria. Animals like goats, cattle and sheep can carry the disease. Sometimes people can get anthrax.
- A person usually gets sick from touching an animal with anthrax or eating undercooked meat from a sick animal.
- Anthrax is not passed from person to person. The chance of coming into contact with anthrax is very low.

### There are three kinds of anthrax. Each kind enters the body in a different way.

**Skin** — This kind is called **cutaneous anthrax**. It is the most common form of the disease. Usually, the infection happens when a person has a cut on the skin and touches wool, hair, or leather from sick animals.

The first sign is an itchy bump that looks like an insect bite. Within a day or two, a blister appears. A painless sore with a black center follows. Sometimes, the area may swell. Without treatment, about 20 percent of people with cutaneous anthrax will die.

**Intestines** — This kind of anthrax happens when a person eats undercooked meat from an animal that had anthrax. The signs are loss of appetite, vomiting, fever and nausea. Later there is serious stomach pain, vomiting blood and harsh diarrhea. Between 25 and 60 percent of people with intestinal anthrax die from it.

**Lungs** — This kind is called **inhalational anthrax**. It is the most serious of the three kinds. It can occur when a person breathes in man-made powdered anthrax or anthrax from hides or skins of infected animals.

The early signs of this kind of anthrax are much like those of a cold or flu. If caught early, inhalational anthrax can be treated with antibiotics. If not treated in time, the result is death.

## Is Anthrax a threat today?

Other countries might use anthrax during a war to make people sick or cause death. There is no way to know for sure if this could happen. In 2001 and 2002, seven people in America died from breathing anthrax powder placed in letters. Since then, there have been no other anthrax deaths.

The United States government believes anthrax could be a threat. It is vaccinating all men and women in the armed forces who might have contact with anthrax during battle.

## Should I get the anthrax vaccine?

Most people do not need the anthrax vaccine. Those who do need it are people who:

- Work with animal hides and furs
- Work in a lab that handles anthrax
- Are in the armed forces